Prairie gardens can make an attractive, low-maintenance alternative to turf grass. Prairie grasses and wildflowers also provide important native plant and animal diversity. These plants attract birds, insects, and small mammals, which serve important ecosystem functions such as pollinating plants, aerating soils, and recycling nutrients.

Here are a few tips for planting a prairie garden to increase wildlife in your yard:

- Try planting species with a variety of heights. Having short, medium, and tall plants means more places for animals to feed, hide, watch, and play.
- Prairies bloom from June to September, and grow taller as the season progresses. Try to plan your garden so that the plants bloom throughout this season. Having something in bloom all the time can be fun to look at, and creates season-long habitat for wildlife.
- Be sure to select plants that are appropriate for your soil, water, and light conditions. Consult your local native plant nursery or check out a Prairie Gardening book for more tips.

Try planting these Great Lakes native species to increase wildlife value in your yard:

- **Big bluestem**
  *Andropogon gerardii*
  Great nesting material and cover plant for birds and grasshoppers.
  ![Big bluestem]

- **Black-eyed Susan**
  *Rudbeckia hirta*
  Nectar attracts bees, butterflies, and insects, while birds enjoy ripe seeds.
  ![Black-eyed Susan]

- **Indiangrass**
  *Sorghastrum nutans*
  Seeds are enjoyed by small mammals and birds. Provides great nesting material.
  ![Indiangrass]

- **Wild bergamot**
  *Monarda fistulosa*
  Flowers attract birds and butterflies. Great nectar source for moths.
  ![Wild bergamot]

- **Little bluestem**
  *Schizachyrium scoparium*
  Great nesting material and cover plant for birds and grasshoppers.
  ![Little bluestem]

- **Prairie smoke, Old man’s whiskers**
  *Geum triflorum*
  Flowers attract butterflies.
  ![Prairie smoke]

- **Rough blazing star, Tall blazing star**
  *Liatris aspera*
  Seeds are enjoyed by birds. Flowers attract butterflies.
  ![Rough blazing star]

- **Switchgrass**
  *Panicum virgatum*
  Great nesting material and cover plant for pheasants, quail, and rabbits.
  ![Switchgrass]

These plants work best in the specified light conditions:
- Sun
- Part Sun
- Shade

To see some of these plants in their native habitat, visit the Alex Dow Prairie at the Nichols Arboretum and the Marilyn Bland Demonstration Prairie at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens!